



National Transportation Safety Board

The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, October 20, 2006

NTSB Determines That Crew's Failure To Remain Attentive Caused 2005 Arkansas Rail Accident



The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of a 2005 collision of two Union Pacific trains in Texarkana, Arkansas was the failure of the crew of train ZYCLD 13 to remain attentive and alert and thereby able to stop before striking an observable standing train in front of them.

Contributing to the severity of the accident was the puncture of a tank car during the collision, which resulted in the release of propylene, a compressed flammable gas. Additionally, the yardmaster did not immediately provide emergency responders with a consist which would have immediately identified the contents in the tank cars, including hazardous materials.

As a result of the accident in the Union Pacific rail yard, propylene flowed into a nearby neighborhood and an unknown source ignited the gas causing a house to explode. Approximately 3,000 residents within a 1-mile radius of the punctured tank car were advised to evacuate the area. There was one fatality.

Following the investigation of this accident, the Safety Board made safety recommendations to Union Pacific Railroad; the City of Texarkana, Arkansas; the International Association of Fire Chiefs; the Association of American Railroads; and the American Short Line Regional Railroad Association.

NTSB Determines That Inadequate Response To Rough Track Conditions Caused Train Derailment In Washington State

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the probable cause of an Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation) passenger train derailment was the BNSF Railway Company's (BNSF) inadequate response to multiple reports of rough track conditions that were subsequently attributed to excessive concrete crosstie abrasion. Contributing to the accident was the Federal Railroad Administration's failure to provide adequate track safety standards for concrete crossties. The abrasion allowed the outer rail to rotate outward and create a wide gage track condition.

On April 3, 2005, a westbound Amtrak train, consisting of a single locomotive unit and four passenger cars, derailed on the BNSF Railway Company's Northwest Division. The train was traveling through a cut section of the Columbia River Gorge near Home Valley, Washington. The train remained upright; however, the cars came to rest leaning against the outside curved embankment. Of the 115 persons aboard, 30 people sustained minor injuries.



National Transportation Safety Board Launches to New York



The Safety Board dispatched a Go Team to New York City to investigate the crash of a small aircraft into a building in Manhattan.

Senior Air Safety Investigator Lorenda Ward served as Investigator-in-Charge of the 6-member team. NTSB Member Debbie Hersman accompanied the team and will serve as principal spokesperson for the on-scene investigation. Keith Holloway and Terry Williams also accompanied the team as public affairs officers. Luke Schiada and Bob Gretz from the Board's Parsippany, New Jersey regional office were first from the Board to arrive on scene.

Member Hersman appeared on several national and local morning shows and provided daily updates to the media while on scene.

On October 11, 2006, a Cirrus SR-20, N929CD, crashed into an apartment building in New York City. Both people on board the airplane were killed and the airplane was destroyed by impact forces and post crash fire. No fatalities occurred on the ground. Substantial damage occurred to several of the residences in the building.

Parties to the investigation include the FAA, Cirrus Aircraft, and Teledyne Continental, the engine manufacturer.

Vice Chairman Addresses Graduated Driver's License Task Force

Vice Chairman Sumwalt, accompanied by Steve Blackistone appeared before the Illinois Graduated Driver's License task force during their October 11 hearing in Chicago. The Vice Chairman's statement addressed improvements to Illinois' graduated driver licensing law, the need for developing an effective driver education curriculum, and strengthening underage drinking laws and programs. While in Chicago, they also met privately with Secretary of State Jesse White, and Senator John Cullerton (D-Chicago) to discuss the Board's recommendations on Youth Highway Safety. The task force is expected to make legislative and program recommendations in the upcoming months.

Small Passenger Vessel Safety Seminar

The Offices of Marine Safety and Safety Recommendations recently hosted a 2-day seminar on small passenger vessel safety on sole state waters with its Coast Guard and State partners. Chairman Rosenker opened the seminar at the Safety Board's Training Center with a wish for a successful outcome that would help prevent future accidents. About 70 participants attended the event, including representation from 27 States and Puerto Rico and several marine safety organizations. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize State officials with the Coast Guard's regulatory program for small passenger vessels. The impetus for this exchange was the October 2, 2005, sinking of the Ethan Allen in Lake George, New York and the tragic loss of 20 lives. During the Safety Board's accident investigation, staff identified a deficiency among the States in effectively regulating small passenger vessel safety. Member Higgins made opening remarks to start the second day of presentations.

The technical program examined U. S. Coast Guard policies and practices developed from more than 50 years of experience in regulating small passenger vessels. Experts presented information on a variety of topics including safety inspection, construction and arrangement of passenger vessels, stability and seaworthiness, passenger safety and crew qualifications, emergency procedures and drills, and accident reporting and investigation.



Bill Gossard (SR) and Rob Henry (MS) teamed up with Paul Schuda and the Training Center staff, and Lcdr Kristin Williams from Coast Guard Headquarters to organize the training seminar.

National Transportation Safety Board, U. S. Coast Guard, State and vessel safety association participants

NTSB Names Director of Highway Safety

Bruce A. Magladry has been the Deputy Director of the Office of Highway Safety (HS) since March 2005. He joined the Safety Board in 1988 as a Human Factors Specialist investigating operator behavior in all modes of transportation. Mr. Magladry joined HS in 1998 as Chief, Investigations Division, and became the HS Deputy Director in 2001. Prior to joining the NTSB, Mr. Magladry was a police detective in Baltimore County, Maryland. He holds a B.A. in Sociology/Psychology from the University of Maryland.

